

# **JEFFERY MATTHEWS ~ DESIGNER**

## **Part Two**

**Glenn H Morgan FRPSL**

### ***1984 Definitive Colour Changes***

It has always been Jeffery's desire to reaffirm and strengthen Arnold Machin's original concepts for the Machin definitives, namely a light head appearing against a dark ground. For many reasons, this concept had been violated on many occasions and so in 1984 work started on creating what soon became known as the 'Matthews Palette'.

Originally, 30 colours (supplied in two separate tranches of 15 colours) were submitted to Royal Mail, with three additional colours supplied around 1997/8.

The 2007 Ruby-coloured £1 stamp is also the work of Jeffery, but, instead of using coloured pigments as previously, coloured films were utilised to get the desired shade.

### ***1984 College of Arms Quincentenary*** (English Heraldry)

This set had lots to include within the design – the Queen's head, explanatory text, face value and a complicated design. Jeffery therefore asked Royal Mail whether it would be possible to introduce a new format for British stamps. Trials undertaken at Harrisons revealed that this was feasible and the now familiar square shape was born.

Originally, gold and silver metallic inks were going to be included on the heraldic elements, but with the high number of colours already needed for each stamp design, yellow and white/grey was substituted. This is deemed to be perfectly acceptable in heraldic terms.

### ***1986 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday of HM The Queen***

Initially favouring a calligraphic approach for this set, the idea emerged that one monochrome image from each of the six decades of the Queen's life would be an interesting treatment. Clearly, six images on a single stamp would not have worked, so Jeffery obtained permission from Royal Mail to produce two set-tenant stamps with three images on each, along with his hand-drawn text.

Jeffery had a friend who worked at a repro-house, so he discussed the possibilities of using a computer to create the designs. He set about selecting the black and white photographs, made his layouts, drew the titling and then handed these component parts to his friend who manipulated them on screen, enabling Jeffery to instantly make alterations to the position of the heads, size and colour. This is quite possibly the first time that CAD (Computer Aided Design) techniques had ever been used to produce a British commemorative stamp.

Jeffery chose the computer route because he had been concerned that if visuals were produced by hand in his normal manner the portraits would not be true likenesses and the Stamp Advisory Committee would be distracted by this.

He therefore chose to produce as near-perfect finished designs as was possible, which the committee clearly appreciated because he later learnt that he had received a round of applause from them.

Following approval of the designs, the data file containing final artwork was made available to Harrison, but it soon became apparent that the equipment was incompatible. It was therefore necessary to revert to the creation of traditional artwork after all!

### ***1986 Royal Wedding, Andrew and Sarah***

A black and white photographic approach with monochrome colour tinting was favoured by Jeffery, together with the use of a horizontal format. Various roughs had been produced, which had found favour with Royal Mail and so further development work was undertaken in readiness for creation of final artwork.

However, quite late in the day Prince Andrew offered an attractive colour photograph of the couple that he ‘suggested’ could be used. This meant a total rethink because the image was not only in colour, but was portrait in format.

An insignia was devised by Jeffery to clearly identify the two different face values for the benefit of postal staff and customers alike. The solid coloured band across the foot of each stamp was the treatment that he used to solve this design problem, resulting in a pleasing pair of stamps.

### ***1987 Flower Photography***

Jeffery was responsible for the composition of this set of stamps to show the photographs of Alfred Lammer to best effect.

### ***1987 Tercentenary of the Revival of the Order of the Thistle*** (Scottish Heraldry)

The style was the same as had been used for the highly successful *English Heraldry* set. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, the 34p crest incorporates a strand of DNA within its design. Whilst heraldry is deemed to be an ancient art, it is fascinating to see how it can symbolise a modern discovery like DNA.

### ***1990 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Penny Black***

Many different treatments were made for the adaptation of the Machin stamp for this important anniversary, including use of elements from the original 1840 stamp. Eventually it was the simpler approach that worked best, stripping out all the unnecessary embellishments and leaving just the two Monarch’s heads. Producing the correct composition was apparently far harder to achieve than the end result might imply.

### ***1990 Stamp World Exhibition £1*** (Miniature Sheet)

Jeffery’s ‘double head’ anniversary 20p stamp was used, but he did not design the margins of the sheet.

### **1993 *Self-Adhesive Definitives***

See *New Definitive Stamps* (last month), for details about the work that resulted in this redesign that first appeared in stamp booklets and afterwards in coil boxes.

### **1998 *The Queen's Beasts***

This issue saw Jeffery interpreting the shapes and angles of the shields and moving the angle of the animals to bring some life and movement to the designs.

### **2000 *The Stamp Show 'Matthews Palette'* (Miniature Sheet)**

Jeffery and Royal Mail's design director of the day Barry Robinson were walking to Trafalgar Square one afternoon following a luncheon at St James's Palace discussing the forthcoming stamp show and what Royal Mail intended producing to mark the event.

Barry mentioned use of the JM logo, Jeffery's artists' palette, that there would be eight current definitive stamps together with a couple of labels in a souvenir sheet format, using colours chosen from the palette by the designers of the Royal Mail exhibition stand. By the time that Jeffery had arrived home it had become obvious that Barry had been commissioning him to produce something, despite his somewhat laid-back approach.

The next day he rang Barry who confirmed his intentions and so Jeffery set about designing a sheet. When the item came out it was apparent to him that he had, in effect, designed something commemorating himself, for it was marketed as a commemoration of Jeffery's contribution to British stamp design. This was a rare honour for a living person and is probably without equal anywhere else in the world.

### **2005 *End of the Second World War* (Miniature Sheet)**

This commission required Jeffery to include the 25p 'Searchlights Over St Paul's' stamp from the *Peace and Freedom* set of 1995 (re-valued as 1<sup>st</sup> class), together with five gold 1<sup>st</sup> class Machin stamps, which he positioned in a V (for Victory) shape. These were shown against a background of British troops and locals celebrating the end of the war, the image of which had been used on the 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamp of the same series.

He expressed his pleasure at being involved with such an issue.

### **2007 *40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Machin Definitive Stamps* (Miniature Sheet)**

We are now up to date with Jeffery's latest issue for Royal Mail. It is so appropriate that a person who has been such a major influence on the appearance of our definitive range of stamps through his work on the typeface,

heraldic devices, colours and layout for more than three decades should have been involved.

He worked in conjunction with Katja Thielen, a Director of Together Design, to create the composition for the Miniature Sheet on-screen as had been done with the 1986 *Queen's Birthday* issue. The embossing idea for the central imagery of Arnold Machin and for the 4d stamp was by Katja. Jeffery expressed both surprise and disappointment that the Smilers™ sheet had omitted this subtle but enhancing feature.

With time fast running out, there was little opportunity for questioning but Jeffery advised that he had no future work planned for Royal Mail at this point and that, 'yes', he had produced designs that were not proceeded with down the years. When asked how he manages to balance the 'aesthetic with the operational', he confirmed that this is always difficult, but essential to overcome and often involves compromises, long drawn-out discussions and printing trials.

He finished by stating that he hopes that there is no need for further colours in the 'Matthews Palette', as he feels that he has run-out of 'paint'! This is partly because there are parts of the colour spectrum that are simply unsuitable for use on stamps, such as light yellow, where there is insufficient tone.

A few days after the event I was able to ask a question that I had often wondered about, namely had he ever designed stamps for other countries. It transpires that he had produced for Harrisons a piece of artwork depicting a building for use within a Trinidad and Tobago stamp design in the early days of his career.

In 1990 he produced artwork to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Penny Black. This issue comprised six stamps and a Miniature Sheet in a stamp book for the Marshall Islands on behalf of Unicover Corporation, the American stamp agent for this US Trust Territory. A large block of Penny Black's was selected as the background for the MS and it was purely good fortune that the stamps scaled-down exactly to fill the space available for the chosen sheet size.

Despite being as busy as ever, Jeffery is really in retirement. Notwithstanding, I hope that he will be commissioned by Royal Mail to produce additional new stamp issues to grace our albums – especially if they were to depict Welsh and Irish heraldry, which have yet to be covered by the Special Stamps programme.

On behalf of *Bulletin* readers, Royal Mail, the stamp printers and the many philatelic admirers of his work, I wish Jeffery a "Happy 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday".

(1650 words)